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ABSTRACT

This report describes the process and results of a project of the Vice Presidents of Student Services Council (VPSSC) of the Dallas County Community College District (DCCCD) which was designed to evaluate and establish direction for the District's student services programs. The history of the project is described in an initial section including project tasks, i.e., studying the profession, conducting topical seminars, drafting and revising the Student Services Philosophy and Purposes, and finally the development of goals and action plans for each of the six councils of the VPSSC. The final sections of the report detail the results of these efforts for the entire council and for each of the six student services areas: the counseling council; the registrar's council; the student development council; the health services council; the financial aid council, and the testing center manager's council. (MCF)

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Emerging Directions:

Student Development in the DCCCD

A Result of the Work
of
DCCCD Student Services Staff
and
Many Colleagues

Prepared by
The VPSS Council
January 31, 1983

CG 016911

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HISTORY AND PROCESS

In the pages that follow, a project is neatly unfolded and spread out for all to see. The apparent clarity and simplicity of the directions set forth here give little hint of the frustrations and struggles out of which they grew. But these seemingly innocuous purposes, this "universally acceptable" philosophy, and these "Mom and apple pie" goals were forged in a cauldron of genuine concern--and frequent disagreement--about the directions for student development in the Dallas County Community College District.

The student services project (it has never received another name) began in late spring, 1981 at a VPSS retreat. The mood was glum; the outlook, gloomy. Resources were tightening, and it was a common assumption that student services would bear the brunt of any reductions. Leadership in the VPSS group was unstable: two interns were filling positions; one position was vacant; one member had just come on the job; one member was not "officially" in charge of student services. As the group analyzed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats, the balance seemed to tip toward the negative. The group listed lack of stability, lack of student needs assessment, lack of measurable student services outcomes, deterioration of professional quality, and low credibility and influence among their problems.

In retrospect, it is more than a little amazing that this group, in the face of these perceived obstacles, decided to do anything other than bemoan their fate. But "strengths and opportunities" included individual

skills, the freedom to create, teamwork, and the increasing need for the concepts and skills of student services. The group recognized its responsibility to carefully and critically establish directions if its services were to be meaningful to the students of the DCCCD.

The VPSS Council began by embarking on a semester-length study of the profession. We studied past, present, and future, building a base of common understanding. Our problems were not unique, we found (small comfort!). Throughout its troubled history, student services nationwide has been plagued by identity crises, by defensiveness, by a failure to evaluate, and by a failure to assess student needs. It has simultaneously embraced and repelled integration with instruction; it has wallowed in a swamp of jargon that borders on gibberish. Nevertheless, the need for student development in the community college is becoming increasingly evident. Within the last decade, we have learned more about adult development than we learned in the previous century. The new "high technologies" bring with them a need for the "high touch" human dimension emphasized in student services. The "Skills for Living" document provided added impetus for the focus on student development. We have learned about the new theoretical and technological tools available to assist in educating our students; now, we realize, we must develop in ourselves and in our staffs the ability to use these tools.

The next phase of the project was a series of four seminars on topics which emerged from the study groups: Adult Development Theories; Wellness; Changing Values; and Technology. These seminars attracted progressively

larger and larger attendance and heightened the awareness and involvement of student services staff and of others interested in our efforts.

Out of the reading and the discussions emerged the first draft of the Student Services Philosophy and Purposes. It stimulated considerable discussion and led to substantive revisions. Draft II was widely circulated and generally accepted. With minor changes, the third and final Statement of Student Services Philosophy and Purposes was issued on November 15, 1982, just over a year after the project began.

Next, the six councils which report to the VPSS Council were asked to develop goals and implications for action in their areas. The goals indicate broad program directions and parameters that the various areas will pursue to fulfill the purposes of student services. The implications for action take two forms: activities that council members expect to pursue in support of the goals and statements of the kinds of changes that may occur if the goals are addressed. These council goals and implications for action have been endorsed by the VPSS Council, after review by the reporting council members.

In many cases, the philosophy, purposes, and goals represent a continuation of current practice. But our directions are clarified, crystallized and emphasized by these statements. Too often, our efforts have been fragmented and disjointed because the common purposes toward which we were working were unstated. Registrars and nurses do more than provide discrete, independent services to students; they share purposes and commitments that bring them under the student development umbrella.

We believe that the emphasis on connections and shared purposes will result in improved service to students and in an improved understanding of what student development is all about.

As we begin to assess the needs of our students more carefully and as we begin to evaluate ourselves according to our success in fulfilling our purposes and meeting these needs, some significant departures from current practice may be seen. The changes will be gradual, and will be accompanied by extensive staff development as we develop a clearer understanding of what it means to "act out" the philosophy, purposes, and goals we have endorsed. One fact is clear: as a result of our reading, our discussion, and our analysis, we have come to recognize that we are part of a lifelong learning institution, only one purpose of which is the granting of degrees. This shift in our view is significant, and it has important implications for our future directions.

We have come to some startling realizations during the course of this project. One realization is the imperative need for good, targeted, staff development, and plenty of it. Within the student services area, most of the staff members are not trained in student development. They come from diverse educational backgrounds, and there are few common theoretical or philosophical threads, even at the director's level. Registrars may have degrees in history or English; Financial Aid Directors may hold business degrees; Health Center Directors have nursing degrees; and so on. All are educators, to be sure, and all are committed to the community college and its students. But the glue of common understanding that creates a

profession and holds it together must be applied here and now. It is not a "given" in the student services equation.

Another realization has been the value of the project in stimulating collaboration and cooperation among people who had never worked together before. It has also created a sense of where student services staff fit on the educational team. We are increasingly recognizing ourselves as educators, and we are realizing the value of increased professionalism for ourselves and our staffs. The active, forward-thinking posture of this project has offered some revitalization for sagging morale. There is a renewed pride in student services and more confidence in our contributions to students and to our colleagues.

We have come a long way, but there remains a long way to go. The struggles are real ones, and they involve values about students, about college identities, about "development" vs. "service," and more. We recognize some shared purposes now, but we are aware of stark differences as well.

The time has come to act upon our philosophy. We have juggled the day-to-day decisions with the theoretical discussions throughout this project, and this balancing act is likely to continue. Our hope is that the philosophy, purposes and goals will help guide us as we make those day-to-day decisions that affect the lives of our students. This touchstone should provide us with the coherence and the clarity to do our jobs more effectively.

STUDENT SERVICES PHILOSOPHY AND PURPOSES
Developed Through the Cooperative Efforts of
DCCCD Student Services Staff
November 15, 1982

Student Services staff are integral members of the community of educators in the Dallas Community Colleges. We share with Instruction and Business Services the responsibility of providing programs, environments, and services which meet the learning and life skills needs of students and staff. Student growth and learning are not the responsibilities of any single area of the college. Only through collaborative and cooperative efforts can a comprehensive educational program be provided. In many ways the purposes of DCCCD staff in Instruction, Business Services, and Student Services are the same. Our differing emphases and methods give unique character to our complementary roles as educators.

From recruitment and admissions through placement and follow-up, Student Services staff provide information, educational experiences, and assistance to students. Such services as counseling, assessment, academic advisement, career planning, financial aid, services for disabled students, health services, admissions and records, student programs and activities, sports, and job placement each contribute to the student's success in college. Increase of knowledge and development of life skills happen both in and out of the classroom. Student development occurs best when all members of the college staff work together to provide experiences which assist students in identifying and reaching their educational goals.

The following statements of purpose describe the emphases and methods of Student Services.

1. To use adult development theories intentionally and systematically in carrying out assigned functions. Because we are serving an essentially adult population, the concepts and principles provided by recent research in adult development theories give us additional useful tools which help us accomplish our complex educational tasks. Adults can grow and change without our assistance, but the intentional and systematic use of adult development theories by student services staff invites further growth.

2. To contribute to the development of skills and attitudes necessary for lifelong learning. In our changing, complex society, no formal schooling will last a lifetime. Now, more than ever, learning to learn, wanting to learn, and recognizing the potential for learning are vital dimensions of education. Student services staff, using expertise in counseling, human development, learning skills, student programming, and assistance with college procedures, make an important contribution to the development of lifelong learners.

3. To assist in creating an environment which is conducive to student development. A learning environment is created through the combined efforts of college staff. It provides a setting in which respect for individual worth is unquestioned, and in which both caring and challenge can stimulate growth. For student services staff, who often work with students who are confused or in crisis, the creation of this setting is critical. As we assist students with college procedures; as we provide

material, logistical, and emotional support for students; and as we plan programs to promote further learning, student services staff foster an atmosphere in which growth is encouraged.

4. To help students in the integration of learning experiences.

A rich array of learning experiences is available to Dallas Community College students. They are encouraged to develop intellectually, emotionally, physically, ethically, and aesthetically. Student services staff play an important role in assisting students to see the relationships among their learning experiences, and to make connections between this learning and other dimensions of their lives. As these connections are made, individual values are frequently clarified. The development of a coherent and consistent value system then becomes the basis for further integration of learning. Skills in human development are essential as these connections are made.

GOALS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

The following goals and implications for action, developed by the six councils which report to the VPSS Council, represent a significant beginning in our efforts to increase understanding, coherence, connection, and effectiveness. But they are only a beginning. The councils had limited time to prepare these documents, and all are subject to the tinkering and the refinement through which paper plans are brought to life. Many areas are not represented here, since no council existed to develop goals. There are no goals for serving the disabled, no mention of athletic programs, and short shrift is given to other important emphasis areas. Human development courses, technically within the instructional purview, are dealt with only in passing, despite their important place in Student Development. These goals, then, may be compared to jigsaw puzzle pieces spread out on the card table on a Sunday afternoon: we have gotten the edges together, but there is still a lot of empty space in the middle!

COUNSELING COUNCIL
GOALS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

The goals and implications for action from the Counseling Council are still in the process of development. Those listed here reflect the current status of our thinking and planning. The size and complexity of our programs, the variety in our staffing patterns, and the differences in student characteristics from campus to campus indicate the need to plan changes carefully. We do not believe that uniformity in priorities, in programs, or in staff organization is appropriate for our district. We do intend to use each other's strengths, knowledge, skills, and models where there is both a demonstrated need and a good fit. In order to reflect the philosophy and fulfill the purposes of student development, the following goals have been adopted:

I. TO DEVELOP COUNSELING STAFF KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS TO A HIGH LEVEL OF COMPETENCE IN THE AREAS OF ADULT LEARNING THEORY, LIFELONG LEARNING, AND THE INTEGRATION OF LEARNING.

   A. With the VPSS Council, plan and participate in a series of district-wide staff development programs which focus on these areas.

   B. Invite major thinkers and educators to work with us to identify specific ways to meet adult learner needs. We suggest Patricia Cross, Lee Kneflkamp, Malcolm Knowles, and Jo Chickering.

   C. Sponsor staff development sessions for the entire staff on adult learning theories and the consequent implications for action and change.

II. TO IMPROVE OUR KNOWLEDGE OF AND ABILITY TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF ADULT LEARNERS.

   A. Initiate and participate in serious needs assessment research, including students, staff, and the community.

   B. Improve communication with each other of our current knowledge of and programming for adults.

III. TO CREATE A COUNSELING ENVIRONMENT AND PROGRAM WHICH FOSTERS INDIVIDUAL GROWTH, THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING, AND A COMMITMENT TO LIFELONG LEARNING.

   A. Model and encourage behaviors and attitudes reflecting the value of lifelong learning, and responsibility for self.

B. Provide special support for re-entry adults leading to participation in the educational mainstream.

C. Revise our admission/assessment/advisement/enrollment process in order to make it less cumbersome for our students.

D. Offer individual credit and non-credit programs for adult needs and interests, including financial planning, retirement, death and dying, parenting, and dealing with aging parents.

IV. TO SEEK AND SUPPORT OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP STUDENTS SEE CONNECTIONS AMONG DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE AREAS AND LIFE EXPERIENCES.

A. Use all contacts with students as a laboratory for problem solving and valuing in the development and application of life skills and learning.

B. Work with instructors to develop modules and to offer classroom experiences dealing with communication skills, stress management, test anxiety, fitness and other similar topics.

REGISTRARS COUNCIL
GOALS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

In order to reflect the philosophy and fulfill the purposes of student development, the following goals have been adopted:

I. TO CONSIDER ADULT DEVELOPMENT THEORIES IN THE EVALUATION OF OFFICE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES.

A. Possibly revise admissions procedures to facilitate the matriculation of adults.

B. Examine writing and graphics of materials distributed to the public to insure the materials represent and speak to an adult population.

C. Insure that staff is familiar with the elements of these theories through staff development activities.

II. TO BE SENSITIVE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF SKILLS AND ATTITUDES NECESSARY FOR LIFELONG LEARNING AND TO DEVELOP AVENUES TO FOSTER IT.

A. Examine standards and procedures to insure they encourage lifelong learning.

B. Maintain contact with former students to encourage lifelong learning.

C. Assist students in documenting their learning through life experience.

III. TO CONTRIBUTE TO AN ATMOSPHERE CONDUCIVE TO STUDENT DEVELOPMENT.

A. Clearly define students' rights and responsibilities as they relate to the admissions office.

B. Engender increased student responsibility in such cases as class attendance and academic progress.

C. Support students in becoming educationally self-sufficient by encouraging them to seek out information and to take action in meeting their responsibilities.

D. Provide leadership in disseminating information regarding services available to adults returning to college.

STUDENT DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
GOALS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

In order to reflect the philosophy and fulfill the purposes of student development, the following goals have been adopted:

I. TO CONTRIBUTE TO STUDENT GROWTH AND LEARNING BY PROVIDING PROGRAMS INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM SETTING WHICH SPEAK TO THE SKILLS AND LIFE TASKS OF THE ADULT GROWTH STAGES.

   A. Initiate staff development session in adult development theories.

   B. Develop a needs assessment instrument in cooperation with Student Services to determine the skills, tasks and program outcomes. Such an instrument is important to respond adequately to the adult learner.

   C. Use "Student Wellness" programming to support adult growth stages.

   D. See ourselves as educators and not just as entertainers or program organizers.

II. TO DESIGN PROGRAMS WHICH SEEK TO INTEGRATE LIFE EXPERIENCES WITH STUDENTS' FORMAL EDUCATIONAL PROCESSES.

   A. Collaborate with faculty as co-educators.

   B. Develop expertise in learning theory, as well as traditional and non-traditional methods of instruction.

   C. Use "Skills for Living" as the skeleton for this integration.

   D. Model lifelong learning through continuous learning experiences.

III. TO CONTRIBUTE TO A CONDUCIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ON THE COLLEGE CAMPUS BY INVITING A SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

   A. Initiate cooperative programming to develop relationships with all campus staffs.

   B. Integrate Student Development with other Student Services units and faculty, and also with such areas as Community Services, Extended Day, etc.

   C. Develop programs which emphasize unified purposes.

IV. TO CHALLENGE STUDENTS TO CLARIFY AND/OR DEVELOP VALUES THROUGH ISSUE-ORIENTED PROGRAMMING AND RELATED CLASSROOM EXPERIENCES.

A. Seek opportunities to learn more about the process of values clarification.

B. Couple value questions with programming.

"As major changes take place in society, it is not technology that threatens an imbalance, it is the lack of values held by individuals that could potentially lead to a major ambiguity in reference to global welfare" (Harmon).

HEALTH SERVICES COUNCIL
GOALS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

In order to reflect the philosophy and fulfill the purposes of student development, the following goals have been adopted:

I. TO IMPROVE OUR KNOWLEDGE OF AND ABILITY TO RESPOND TO COMMON HEALTH CONCERNS OF OUR POPULATION.

A. Provide leadership in meeting the health needs of DCCCD.

B. Use adult development theories to better serve the concerns of our diverse population.

C. Communicate with outside agencies concerned with health care to aid in the identification of health concerns.

D. Communicate with other councils, particularly Counseling and Admissions.

II. TO PROVIDE PERSONS WITH AWARENESS OPPORTUNITIES AND EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS WHICH ENCOURAGE INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR OPTIMAL HEALTH.

A. Contribute to the educational process through health related awareness programs, screening, referral and counseling.

B. Provide leadership in the implementation and development of the employee wellness program.

C. Emphasize health education in the DCCCD curriculum.

III. TO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ATMOSPHERE THAT OFFERS POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT FOR A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE.

A. Encourage the development of skills and attitude that emphasize stress control, illness prevention and change for optimum healthy life styles.

B. Encourage the cooperation of all areas that impact the health of our population.

IV. TO COOPERATE AND COORDINATE WITH COMMUNITY RESOURCES.

A. Cooperate with the various community agencies that provide health related resources that enhance our program.

B. Provide health related resources to lay groups in the community.

FINANCIAL AID COUNCIL
GOALS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

In order to reflect the philosophy and fulfill the purposes of student development, the following goals have been adopted:

I. TO UTILIZE VARIOUS OUTREACH METHODS TO ENCOURAGE AND ASSIST A DIVERSE AID POPULATION.

A. Provide student aid to any eligible student in a systematic and timely manner.

B. Search for different sources of aid for varying groups of students.

C. Publicize financial aid through lectures, one-on-one counseling, high school workshops, classroom presentations, and public television to reach/inform a variety of students who may have varying learning styles.

D. Encourage Public Information Directors to include financial aid information in all publications.

E. Provide students with financial aid information to be used beyond the community college level.

II. TO EDUCATE THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY IN FISCAL MANAGEMENT AS IT PERTAINS TO LIFELONG LEARNING.

A. Provide financial aid counseling related to the different types of programs available, eligibility factors, and the proper completion of forms.

B. Advise students of proper money management procedures and budgeting resources.

C. Provide time management counseling.

D. Work with faculty and administrators to help promote and encourage a comprehensive understanding of financial aid programs.

E. Initiate and continue evaluation of financial aid operations of the district.

III. TO ASSIST IN CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT WHICH IS CONDUCIVE TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS.

A. Maintain a student-centered environment that provides an open, non-threatening atmosphere.

B. Maintain unbiased attitudes.

C. Provide staff development to educate employees regarding proper procedures, processes, and policies in order to maintain a high quality of contact with students.

D. Develop and maintain common financial policies, forms and procedures.

E. Maintain a professional attitude in all situations.

F. Provide a comprehensive data management system to streamline our process of awards and record management.

G. Keep administrative staff updated through attendance of workshops, seminars and conferences.

H. Provide referral services for counseling, legal aid, housing, health services, transportation, job placement, tutoring, handicapped vocational rehabilitation, etc.

IV. TO HELP EASE THE TRANSITION BETWEEN THE STUDENTS' FORMAL EDUCATION AND CAREERS.

A. Provide students with co-op work experience.

B. Provide work-study programs where students work with professionals and view high-quality value systems.

C. Place students in jobs related to their academic fields.

TESTING CENTER MANAGERS COUNCIL
GOALS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ACTION

Each of the seven testing centers is unique in its staffing, facilities, and functions. As the testing center managers work together to achieve common goals, acknowledgment of differences occurs frequently. In order to reflect the philosophy and fulfill the purposes of student development, the following goals have been adopted:

I. TO PERCEIVE OURSELVES AS PART OF THE TEAM IN PROVIDING EDUCATIONAL SERVICES AT OUR COLLEGES AND DISTRICT-WIDE BY MAKING A PROFESSIONAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL LIVES OF THOSE WE SERVE AND BY PROVIDING A BRIDGE BETWEEN INSTRUCTIONAL AND STUDENT SERVICES AREAS.

   A. Work on establishing credibility.

   B. Serve as role models for team behavior that bridges the gap between instruction and student services.

II. TO CREATE ENVIRONMENTS AT EACH TESTING CENTER THAT ARE CONDUCIVE TO OPTIMAL TEST PERFORMANCE, INCLUDING ADEQUATE FACILITIES AND PERSONNEL WHO ARE COMPETENT IN HUMAN RELATIONS AND TECHNICAL SKILLS.

   A. Initiate staff development for personnel working in testing centers.

   B. Make people aware of the need for optimal facilities for testing centers and provide expertise in planning such facilities.

III. TO BE ACTIVE IN FORMULATION OF INSTITUTIONAL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES THAT AFFECT THE STUDENTS AND SERVICES OF THE TESTING CENTERS.

   A. Develop policy manuals for each testing center.

   B. Initiate staff development for faculty which will include procedures for dissemination of information to students.

   C. Become more assertive on policy matters involving testing centers.

IV. TO WORK COOPERATIVELY IN SHARING INFORMATION, SOLVING PROBLEMS, AND PURCHASING TESTING MATERIALS.

   A. Work to find new methods which will facilitate the flow of information.

   B. Establish procedures for purchasing materials district-wide.

   C. Share information. (The assessment procedure is a good example of this in action.)

MORE THAN A NAME: STUDENT SERVICES TO STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Almost from the inception of the student services project, there has been controversy about what we are to be called. We have conducted polls; we have held discussions on campus; we have asked councils for their views. Opinion, while leaning toward a name change, remained divided. Finally, we decided to decide. We had heard every pro and con, considered every angle. And we decided (albeit not unanimously) that the name of the student services area should be changed to student development.

Why upset the apple cart by changing the name? Is it really worth it to reprogram the computer, correct the catalog, change the stationery, make at least a few people unhappy, and search for a new name for our existing student development unit? The change is in some ways a symbolic one, meaning far more to the staff within student development than to any external groups, which are usually confused about the name anyway. But symbols carry powerful messages, and the name change speaks loudly to a message we wish to convey.

Student Services, a time-honored name in the DCCCD, has come to represent a reactive, frequently passive approach. It is process-centered, focused on the means which one uses to accomplish the task. The "task" itself is student development--helping students to learn, to connect, to grow, to challenge, to cope, to live. By changing the name of our area to Student Development, we hope to make a clear statement of our conviction that our skills and our values are aimed directly at the growth of our students. The name reflects our philosophical commitment and our avowed purposes. It symbolizes a new era for us, and it will serve as a constant reminder of the course which we have chosen for ourselves.